

2026

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

**FOR GEORGIA'S
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

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1 LEGISLATIVE LANDSCAPE

April 2, 2026 (Sine Die) marked the end of the 2026 Georgia General Assembly's legislative session. As the final year of the 158th General Assembly biennium, all Georgia House and Senate seats are up for election in the upcoming cycle. Additionally, a number of statewide offices (including Governor, Lt. Governor, and the state constitutional officers), one of Georgia's U.S. Senate seats, and a handful of Georgia's Congressional seats are also up for election.

Subsequently, all members of the Georgia Legislature, plus the current Lt. Governor, are either running for their existing seat, higher office, or stepping away from elected office altogether.

Running for higher office:

- 8 State Senators
- 9 House Members

Not running again:

- 3 State Senators
- 7 House Members

LEGEND:

- **ENACTED OR SIGNED INTO LAW**
- **DID NOT PASS OUT OF CHAMBER**
- **GOVERNOR ACTION**
(BUDGET DIRECTION OR LEGISLATION VETO)
- **PASSED CHAMBER**
(DID NOT REQUIRE GOVERNOR APPROVAL)
- **BLUE-RIBBON STUDY COMMITTEE**

2 OVERARCHING POLICY ISSUES

TAXES

HB 1000 (Gambill-15th)

Surplus Tax Refund

 **ENACTED INTO LAW**

Tax Refund

- Provides a one-time tax refund to taxpayers who filed returns for both the 2024 and 2025 tax years.
 - Single filers up to \$250; heads of households up to \$375; married couples filing jointly up to \$500.
- Excludes nonresident alien individuals, dependents claimed in 2024, and estates or trusts.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

INCOME TAX

- Prior year undesignated state surplus provides a one-time additional refund for tax year 2025
 - \$250 for single filers
 - \$375 for head of household filers
 - \$500 for married filing jointly

AFY26

\$1.17 Million
Dept. of Revenue / Taxpayer Services

FY27

GOVERNOR ACTION

HB 1199 (Carson-46th)

 **ENACTED INTO LAW**

Georgia IRC Conformity & Gas Tax Suspension

Internal Revenue Code Update

- Provides the annual Internal Revenue Code update to Georgia Code; applicable to tax years on or after January 1, 2025 for relevant federal laws passed on or before January 1, 2026.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Cap

- Places an annual aggregate cap of \$100 million on the state low-income housing tax credit for tax years 2026 through 2028.

Motor Fuel Excise Tax Suspension

- Suspends collection of excise tax on motor fuel for 60 days beginning on the effective date of the Act (suspension sunsets May 19, 2026; however, Governor Kemp used an executive order on May 15 to extend the suspension through June 3).

HB 463 (Blackmon-146th)



Georgia Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2026

A comprehensive tax relief package that lowers taxes, expands deductions, and reforms state tax incentives.

Income Tax Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Final reduction rate: 4.99% → 3.99%
Personal Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dependent exemption increases to \$5,000, then +\$125 each year (examples metrics met) until reaching \$6,000
Standard Deduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Single: \$15,000 → up to \$18,000Married: \$30,000 → up to \$36,000 (increases tied to economic metrics)
Retirement Income (65+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Exclusion increases \$65,000 → \$70,000 Effective January 1, 2027
Tips & Overtime (2026-2028)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Up to \$1,750 deduction for tips or overtime incomeOvertime premiums only; for tip-eligible professions
Rainy Day (Shortfall Reserve)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reserve limit increases 15% → 20%Release threshold increases from 4% → 8%Creates the “Taxpayer Relief Fund”
Repeals & Sunsets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Repeals multiple tax credits and sales tax exemptionsSunsets air/water pollution equipment exemption (certificates issued before sunset continue)

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SB 33 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)



Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization Act of 2026

HOME Act of 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishes the Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization Act of 2026
Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Authorizes a new Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST) as an alternative to the Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST). This provision does not increase the total amount of sales tax that may be levied within a jurisdiction
Property Tax Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides funds for dollar-for-dollar property tax relief based on local homestead exemptions adopted by local Act and, where applicable, proportional reductions in millage rates.Imposes a rate of 1 percent.May be levied for up to ten years before renewal
Eligible Jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Applies to counties and cities that levy and collect property taxes and have a local Act in place granting the HOST homestead exemption.
Voter Approval Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Takes effect following approval by county voters of a local homestead exemption authorizing the LHOST
Distribution of Excess Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funds in the countywide trust account as of August 1 each year determine the maximum homestead exemption that may be applied.Excess funds are distributed within the special district to proportionately reduce millage rates, within 30 days after jurisdictions mail tax bills

Continued on the next page...

SB 33 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)



Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization Act of 2026 continued from previous page

Education Funding Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes provisions related to calculations of QBE for education purposes
Reserve Fund Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the maximum allowable reserve fund balance from 15 percent to 25 percent
Local Tax Referenda Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits holding local tax referenda in conjunction with a presidential preference primary
HB 581 Opt-Out Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the ability of local governments and school districts to opt out of HB 581 (2024). All jurisdictions previously opting out are subject to the exemption prospectively. The base year is defined as the year prior to the first applicable year of the exemption.
HB 581 Technical Revisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revises provisions from HB 581 to address scenarios involving property improvements and re-eligibility for homestead exemptions. (HB 581 established a statewide floating homestead exemption limiting taxable property value increases to the rate of inflation and authorized a voter-approved 1 percent FLOST.)
Property Assessment Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes duties and deadlines for municipal and school tax officials to review and revise property tax assessments — responsibilities previously limited to county boards of tax assessors with a typical July 15 deadline
Recovery of Improper Exemptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limits the ability to collect unpaid taxes resulting from improperly granted homestead exemptions. Requires local tax officials to demonstrate that the improper exemption resulted from intentional misrepresentation or fraudulent action by the taxpayer in order to recover the associated tax benefits

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

PROPERTY TAX

- Homeowner Tax Relief Grant (HTRG) program to allow for the maximum exemption on the assessed home value as authorized in the Georgia Constitution Article VII, Section IIA for each qualifying homestead for the tax year beginning January 1, 2026

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
	\$850 Million	---	---

2 OVERARCHING POLICY ISSUES

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

HB 1118 (Donatucci-105th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Maternal Leave for State Employees

Paid Maternal Leave for State Employees

- Provides **120 hours of paid maternal leave** for eligible state employees who have been employed for at least six continuous months
- Leave must be used within three weeks after delivery

Employee Protections

- Employers are prohibited from interfering with leave or discriminating against an eligible employee for exercising maternal leave

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution rate for the State Benefit Health Plan 	29.454% to 20.264% Statewide	29.454% to 20.264% Statewide	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strategically invest in increasing the funded ratio in order to improve long-term financial viability of the pension system and support state retirees 	\$100 Million Employees' Retirement System of Georgia	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funds to reflect an additional 2.92% increase in the employer contribution for the Employees' Retirement System 	---	\$100 Million Employees' Retirement System of Georgia	\$100 million disregarded due to disregard language triggering annual COLAs. Therefore, no new appropriation was authorized.

House Blue Ribbon Study Committee

Blue Ribbon Study Committee on Local Government Taxation, Funding, and Budgeting

 **APPOINTED BY SPEAKER JON BURNS**

Mission: Evaluate Georgia's local funding mechanisms to strengthen transparency, ensure fairness for taxpayers, and increase fiscal accountability for local governments

Members: Rep. Chas Cannon (R-Moultrie), Chair
 Rep. Victor Anderson (R-Cornelia)
 Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire)
 Rep. Josh Bonner (R-Fayetteville)
 Rep. Mike Cheokas (R-Americus)

Rep. Matt Dubnik (R-Gainesville)
 Rep. Robert Flournoy (D-Hampton)
 Rep. Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown)
 Rep. Yasmin Neal (D-Jonesboro)
 Rep. Mitchell Scoggins (R-Cartersville)

3 PRE-K TO 12 EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SB 589 (Brass-6th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Georgia's Pre-K Enrollment Age (and Student ID 9-8-8)

Georgia Pre-K Eligibility

- Allows parents or guardians to enroll children in Georgia's voluntary Pre-K program if the child is four or five years old by September 1
- Participation is limited to 1 year
- 4- and 5-year-olds must receive equal consideration for available slots

Effective 2026-2027 school year

Student ID Mental Health Resources

- Requires public schools that issue student ID badges in grades 6-12 to include 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline information, including that students can call or text 9-8-8 for support related to suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, or substance use concerns

Applies to badges issued on or after July 1, 2026

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time salary supplement of \$2,000 for formula-earned teachers and assistant teachers 	<p>\$17.22 Million DECAL / PreK Program</p>	<p>---</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Rising Pre-K Program and add 25 new classes for Summer 2026 	<p>Budget Direction: Utilize \$881,000 in existing funds DECAL / PreK Program</p>	<p>---</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the extended day program to the Pre-K priority group 	<p>Budget Direction: Utilize \$2,428,268 in existing funds DECAL / PreK Program</p>	<p>---</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase health insurance employer PMPM rate for eligible employees from \$1,885 to \$1,935, effective July 1, 2026 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$892,200 DECAL/Pre-K Program</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Georgia Pre-K class sizes from 22 to 20 (Year 3 of a four-year phase-in) 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$12 Million DECAL/Pre-K Program</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the extended day program to the Pre-K priority group 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$9.71 Million DECAL/Pre-K Program</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Rising Pre-K program and add 50 new classes 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$708,500 plus \$881,000 in existing funds DECAL/Pre-K Program</p>	<p>Disregard directive to use \$881,000 (already obligated to the base Pre-K formula). Only \$708,500 in new lottery funds released for up to 25 new classes.</p>

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide days of leave for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers 	---	\$3.98 Million plus recognize \$5,738,012 in existing funds DECAL/Pre-K Program	\$2.75 Million withheld; \$1.23 Million proceeds at rates commensurate with the QBE formula
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Summer Transition Program partnership with the Alliance Theater arts education 	---	\$350,000 DECAL/Pre-K Program	\$350,000 withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added to reflect enrollment growth in the State Health Benefit Plan 	---	\$3.33 Million DECAL/Pre-K Program	---

3 PRE-K TO 12 EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

HB 1193 (Erwin-32nd)



Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026

School-Based Literacy Coaches

- Provides grants to local public schools serving grades K-3 to fund **one school-based literacy coach**
- Literacy coach must spend **at least 70% of the school day** working directly with students, teachers, and supporting evidence-based instructional practices

Regional Literacy Support

- Establishes **regional literacy coaches and leadership literacy coaches** within Georgia's 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) to support school-based literacy coaches

Literacy Coaching Endorsement

- Requires the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) to create a **literacy coaching endorsement** for teachers and other certificated personnel

Early Literacy & Dyslexia Act Revisions

- Amends the Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act by requiring **unified literacy plans** for districts and charter schools, **mandating K-3 instructional materials aligned to the science of reading**, and revising universal reading screener processes
- Requirements increase over time and align with state funding by 2029-2030

Educator Preparation Oversight

- Requires the PSC to review educator preparation programs for compliance with science-of-reading curricula and report findings annually to governing bodies and the legislature

State Literacy Leadership Structure

- Creates a State Literacy Director, Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, and Georgia Literacy Task Force within the Office of Student Achievement to oversee instructional materials, professional learning, and reading screeners.

Full-Day Kindergarten

- Requires local school systems to provide a full-day kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Attendance & Readiness

- Requires children to attend kindergarten before first grade (with readiness-based exceptions)
- Establishes first-grade readiness assessments and reporting requirements
- Revises promotion and retention policies
- Strengthens intervention and parent notification processes.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

LITERACY	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy coaches in schools with students grades K-3 (HB 1193) 	---	\$70.42 Million GaDOE Quality Basic Education Program	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RESA-based literacy coaches (HB 1193) 	---	Recognize existing funds GaDOE Literacy Coach Initiative	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional learning and development for teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators 	---	\$150,000 Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of high-quality instructional literacy materials (Pre-K - 3rd) 	---	\$330,000 GOSA	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of universal reading screeners 	---	\$96,000 GOSA	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase two research and landscape analysis, literacy pilot with selected RESAs, establish the Georgia READS community collaborative framework, and provide quarterly reports 	---	\$1.58 Million (one-time funds) GOSA / Literacy Initiative Coordination	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction pursuant to HB 1193 (2026) 	---	(\$663,837) GOSA / Literacy Initiative Coordination	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Literacy 	---	\$250,000 GOSA/ Literacy Initiative Coordination	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four additional Program Approval Specialists to support early literacy efforts 	---	\$527,966 Governor's Professional Standards Commission	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elimination for research contract (one-time funds) 	---	(\$2.03 Million) GOSA/ Literacy Initiative Coordination	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of an applied reading center for teacher and literacy coach professional development 	---	\$5.5 Million University System of Georgia/ Public Service/Special Funding Initiatives	---

HB 1030 (Donatucci-105th)



Math Matters Act

Core Math Instruction Requirements

- Local school systems must provide **at least 60 minutes of daily core math instruction** for students in grades 4-5
- Begins in the 2027-2028 school year**

Advanced Math Pathways

- Requires local school systems to establish **advanced math courses for grades 6-10**, with **automatic enrollment** for top-performing students and options for parent-requested enrollment or withdrawal

Teacher Certification and Math Training

- Revises teacher certification standards to require training in **evidence-based math instruction**, including problem solving, conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and data-informed instructional practices

SB 179 (Dixon-45th)



Computer Science Graduation Requirement & Georgia Virtual School Updates

Graduation Requirement

- Requires students to complete a **computer science course or a CTAE course with embedded computer science content** in grades 8-12 to graduate
- Begins in the 2031-2032 school year**

Funding for Georgia Virtual School

- Increases local school system payments to Georgia Virtual School from **\$250** to **\$350** per student per semester course

Student Civic and Leadership Activities

- Encourages local school systems to support participation in **citizenship, civic, and patriotic activities** offered by organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the USA

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

CURRICULUM & TESTING	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College preparatory exams based on increased utilization 	\$1.3 Million GaDOE Curriculum Development	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College preparatory exams 	---	\$500,000 GaDOE Curriculum Development	Restricted to currently covered exams only; no expansion to additional exams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for high-demand equipment grants 	---	\$750,000 GaDOE Technology/ Career Development	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for high-demand heavy equipment simulator 	---	\$800,000 GaDOE Technology/ Career Development	\$800,000 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial intelligence and coding literacy program 	---	\$1 Million GaDOE Technology/ Career Education	\$1 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character education programming 	---	\$1 Million (one-time funds) GaDOE Non-QBE Formula Grants	\$3 Million Withheld (\$1 Million in new funds PLUS \$2 Million FY26 one-time continuation)

3 PRE-K TO 12 EDUCATION

PATHWAYS AND COMPLETION

HB 1284 (Silcox-53rd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

High School Diplomas for Students Receiving End-of-Life Care

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Diploma Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows high school students with a terminal medical condition who are receiving end-of-life care to be awarded a high school diploma upon written request to the superintendent accompanied by medical documentation |
| Graduation Requirement Waivers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows local boards of education to petition the State Board of Education to waive standard graduation credit requirements; upon approval, a diploma may be awarded, including posthumously if necessary |

SB 513 (Dickerson-21st)

 **DID NOT PASS**

Everyday Counts Act

- | | |
|---|---|
| Attendance Intervention Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would have required local school systems to adopt a multi-tiered framework of attendance support and interventions Defined a “chronically unexcused student” as a student with five unexcused absences during the first 50 days of the school year |
| Attendance & Student Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would have linked school attendance to driving privileges for minors Would have made chronically unexcused students ineligible for extracurricular activities until they comply with an intervention plan |

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

ATTENDANCE AND GRADUATION

- Reduction in state funds match to reflect a loss of federal funding from lower graduation targets
- Statewide attendance officer

AFY26

FY27

(\$1.01 Million)
Dept. of Defense / Youth Educational Services

GOVERNOR ACTION

\$240,000
GaDOE Central Office

\$240,000 Withheld;
Includes both a financial turnaround officer and attendance officer; Conference Committee only funded the attendance officer

HB 907 (Jones-47th)



Completion Special Schools Act

- | | |
|--|---|
| Completion Special School Program Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires completion special schools to submit their current program offerings twice annually to resident school systems for prominent public posting |
| Alternative Education Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires local school systems within the service area of a completion special school to either partner through a collaborative agreement or directly provide alternative education programs and services for students in grades 9-12 who are at risk of not completing school |
| Student Withdrawal & Dropout Notification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires local school districts to share contact information for students who withdraw or stop attending school within 10 school days of the withdrawal or dropout |

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

COMPLETION SCHOOLS	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One time funds for a Completion schools planning grant for Southern Rivers Completion High School to support the opening of up to six locations 	\$500,000 GaDOE Charter Schools	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion Special Schools Supplement 	\$1.72 Million in formula funds	\$1.63 Million GaDOE Quality Basic Education Program	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in one-time funding for completion of construction industry certification program 	---	(\$1 Million) GaDOE Technology/Career Education	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing costs for Career Navigator and Top State for Talent initiatives 	---	\$3.98 Million GOSA	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction along with budget direction: Maintain funds for planning grants for State Completion Special schools; release contingent upon submission of an implementation plan 	---	(\$1.5 Million) GaDOE Charter Schools	\$500,000 withheld; no completion schools confirmed to open in FY27

SB 369 (Still-48th)



Dropout Recovery Charter Schools & Charter Schools Act Update

Nontraditional Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the State Board of Education to establish clear rules and standards for nontraditional education programs, including dropout recovery, credit recovery, and flexible scheduling models Designates dropout recovery charter schools as a distinct category with specific standards and accountability requirements
Virtual Student Extracurricular Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands the “Dexter Mosley Act” to include virtual school students, allowing them to participate in extracurricular and athletic activities at their local public schools, subject to eligibility requirements such as enrollment status, academic performance, and tryouts
School Technology Purchasing & Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires local school boards to consider the total cost of ownership when purchasing educational technology devices and equipment Beginning in 2027, school systems must submit annual technology device usage reports to the GaDOE
Charter School Incentive Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revises the charter school incentive grant program to provide \$250,000 annually per approved charter school during the first three years of operation, subject to a statewide annual cap of \$2.25 million

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
CHARTER SCHOOLS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Commission Charter School supplement (for a total supplement of \$292,144,723) 	\$27.09 Million GaDOE QBE Program	\$40.27 Million GaDOE QBE Program	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midterm adjustment to the charter system grant 	\$60,958	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midterm adjustment to the State Commission Charter School supplement for training and experience 	\$3.86 Million GaDOE QBE Program	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in funding for the charter system grant 	---	(\$615,550) GaDOE QBE Program	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants to school systems to encourage authorization of locally approved charter schools pursuant to SB 82 (2025) 	---	\$500,000 GaDOE Charter Schools	---

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

SCHOOLS	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added for enrollment growth (Midterm adjustment), training, and experience 	\$43.88 Million GaDOE QBE Program	\$11.67 Million GaDOE QBE Program	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formula funds added, based on enrollment 	---	\$259,347 GaDOE Regional Education Services Agencies (RESAs)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formula funds added for Residential Treatment Facilities, based on attendance 	---	\$339,082 GaDOE Non-QBE Formula Grants	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formula funds added for Sparsity Grants, based on enrollment data 	---	\$1.44 Million GaDOE Non-QBE Formula Grants	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formula funds added for Equalization grants 	---	\$258.82 Million GaDOE Non-QBE Formula Grants	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjusted funds for the Local Five Mill Share 	---	(\$35.98 Million) GaDOE QBE Local Five Mill Share	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in formula funds based on GNETS training, enrollment, and experience 	---	(\$2.16 Million) GaDOE GNETS	---

HB 1107 (Rice-139th)



Excellent Teacher Preparation Act

Teacher Preparation Program Accountability

- Creates a statewide accountability system for teacher preparation programs, requiring the Professional Standards Commission to develop and publish annual performance measures for every educator preparation provider (EPP) in Georgia

Educator Workforce Performance Metrics

- Tracks outcomes such as exam pass rates, job placement, retention, employer and graduate satisfaction, and student performance
- Directs the Office of Student Achievement to include these findings in its annual educator workforce report

SB 150 (Hickman-4th)



Retired Educators Return-to-Work Program Extension

Retired Educator Return-to-Work Program

- Extends the sunset for retired educators to return to work from June 30, 2026 to June 30, 2030

Literacy Credential Requirements

- Requires educators who return to work in English, language arts, or writing to hold a current dyslexia or reading endorsement approved by the Professional Standards Commission

HB 1302 (Gambill-15th)



Education and Workforce Strategy Act

Agency Renaming and Expanded Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renames the Office of Student Achievement to the Office of Education and Workforce Strategy and expands its role in coordinating education, workforce planning, and data systems across agencies
Workforce and Education Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires development of a combined WIOA Plan and Perkins State Plan, aligning secondary, postsecondary, and adult workforce programs with regional labor market needs
Apprenticeship Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designates the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) as the state apprenticeship agency and renames the High Demand Apprenticeship Program to the Top State for Talent Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Program
Education Data and Career Academies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates an Education Data Governance Board and directs the Office of College and Career Academies within TCSG to support workforce-aligned education programs

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
EDUCATOR WORKFORCE			
Provide a \$2,000 one-time supplement to full-time, benefit-eligible state and Regents employees, formula-earned K-12 teachers, school administrators, custodians, nutrition workers, school nurses, and bus drivers. (AFY26)		---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer Teachers Retirement System (TRS) contribution for non-certified school management 	\$1.4 Million Teacher Retirement System (pursuant to O.C.G.A 47-3-63)	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to TRS employer contribution rate 	---	22.32% (up from 21.91%) Teacher Retirement System employer contribution adjustment	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise employer healthcare contribution per-member-per-month (PMPM) for certified school employees, and lead and assistant teachers from \$1,885 to \$1,935 <p>Effective July 1, 2026</p>	---	\$71,414,657 GaDOE, DECAL, Georgia Public Libraries, and Georgia Military College Budget direction: Increase employer healthcare PMPM for non-certified school employees to match certified school employees	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction for Governor’s School Leadership Academy 	---	(\$2.62 Million) Governor’s School Leadership Academy	---

3 PRE-K TO 12 EDUCATION

SCHOOL FUNDING, GOVERNANCE, & ACCOUNTABILITY

HB 1164 (Wade-9th)



State Board of Education Audit Committee

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|---|--|
| State Board Audit Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a State Board of Education audit committee to review fiscal reports for school systems, state charter schools, and completion special schools designated as high risk or moderate risk, meeting no less than six times each fiscal year |
| Fiscal Monitoring and Reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires annual audit readiness certification by December 31 each year. Creates a four-tier state-wide fiscal monitoring and intervention system with increased reporting and public transparency for financially troubled systems |
| Financial Oversight and Intervention Authority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides stronger tools to combat financial mismanagement, including reviewing waiver use, conducting additional audits, limiting superintendent contract extensions in high-risk districts, and allowing contract changes or termination under severe fiscal conditions |

SB 472 (Hickman-4th)



Local School Board Suspension for Financial Mismanagement

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|---|--|
| School Board Member Suspension Authority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows the State Board of Education to recommend to the governor that local school board members be suspended with pay when the state auditor flags a district for the highest level of financial monitoring or issues findings of financial mismanagement or misconduct |
| Superintendent Contract Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tightens rules for superintendent contracts in financially high-risk systems, limiting contracts to 12-month renewals, and requires contracts to treat certain auditor findings or failure to follow a required intervention plan as defaults that allow termination for cause |
| Annual Financial Audits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the Department of Audits and Accounts to perform annual financial and compliance audits for each local school system and state charter school |

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

SCHOOL SYSTEM AUDITS

- Appropriations to assume responsibility for additional public school system audits over a three-year period

AFY26

FY27

\$1.58 Million
Dept. of Audits and Accounts

GOVERNOR ACTION

HB 328 (Carpenter-4th)



Contributions to Student Scholarship Organizations

Student Scholarship Organization (SSO) Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amends Georgia’s student scholarship organization (SSO) laws by expanding eligibility for private school tuition scholarships, including removing the six-week public school attendance requirement for military dependents stationed in Georgia, students with IEPs, Section 504 plans, or certain diagnosed disabilities
Legislative Ethics Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits any member of the General Assembly or a member’s spouse from receiving income from a student scholarship organization during a taxable year in which the organization receives a contribution for a tax credit
SSO & Public School Grant Tax Credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the aggregate cap for SSO tax credits to \$150 million and increases the aggregate amount of tax credits for nonprofit corporation public school grants to \$25 million
Virtual Instruction Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Places accountability measures on local school systems providing virtual instruction to out-of-system students, prohibiting this where the system’s CCRPI score is below 70 for two previous school years
Transit SPLOST Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits counties from using TSPLOST revenue to provide free or reduced fares for public transit; prohibits resubmission of a Transit SPLOST referendum for eight years if voters reject it.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP, SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promise Scholarship Appropriations 	(\$85.96 Million) Georgia Student Finance Commission/ Promise Scholarship Reduced based on eligible applications for 2025-2026 school year	(\$41.02 Million) Georgia Student Finance Commission / Promise Scholarship	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Needs Scholarship 	\$16.08 Million GaDOE QBE Program	\$5.53 Million GaDOE QBE Program	---

3 PRE-K TO 12 EDUCATION

STUDENT SUPPORTS, SCHOOL SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENT

HB 651 (Powell-33rd)



School Zone Speed Camera Reform

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|---|---|
| School Zone Speed Camera Oversight | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Revises provisions related to automated traffic enforcement safety devices in school zones. Devices are regulated by the DOT, including through permit approval |
| Enforcement Thresholds and Hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Citations may only be issued when a vehicle exceeds the posted speed limit by more than 10 miles per hour, within one hour before and after the school's starting and dismissal time. Local governing bodies may enact further limitations on enforcement hours |
| Local Referendum Requirement | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires local referendums to approve device contracts every six years for new or existing contracts. If a referendum is rejected, the local government may not resubmit the question for three years |
| Use of Revenue and Processing Fees | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prohibits local governments from using money collected to fund law enforcement officer salaries. Reduces the electronic processing fee from \$25 to \$10. |

SB 148 (Hatchett-50th)



Outdoor Learning Spaces Pilot Program

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| Hunting Safety Instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Allows local school boards to offer hunting safety instruction for students in grades six through 12. The State Board of Education will adopt instructional standards no later than April 1, 2026. |
| Outdoor Learning Spaces Pilot | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishes an outdoor learning spaces pilot program; the DOE will report results to the House and Senate Education Committees after the third year of the pilot. |
| AED Program Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Removes the requirement of involvement from a licensed physician in automated external defibrillator programs. |
| School Personnel Leave | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increases the number of personal days school personnel may utilize accumulated sick leave for from three days to five days. |

SB 523 (Goodman-8th)



Prohibition on Antisemitism in Educational Settings

- | | |
|--|---|
| Nondiscrimination Protections in Public Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prohibits exclusion from participation, denial of benefits, or discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion in educational programs or employment through a public school receiving federal or state financial assistance |
| Statewide K-12 Title VI Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishes a state-wide K-12 Title VI coordinator dedicated to monitoring complaints of discrimination and harassment in public schools, in accordance with Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 |
| Higher Education Complaint Procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires the University System of Georgia and TCSG to establish policies and procedures to report, investigate, and act on complaints related to discrimination and harassment. |

SB 552 (Watson-1st)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

"True Patriotism and Universal Student Access (TPUSA) Act"

- Student Political Activities and Groups**
 - Permits students enrolled in public schools to organize partisan or non-partisan political activities and groups before, during, and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other noncurricular student activities during non-instructional time.
- Equal Access to School Facilities**
 - Partisan and non-partisan groups will be given the same access to public school facilities and the same opportunity to announce meetings as is given to other groups without discrimination, provided meetings are voluntary, student-initiated, and do not substantially interfere with educational activities.

HR 145 (Erwin-32nd)

 **PASSED THE HOUSE**

Vision Screening

This is an urging resolution, which does not require Senate or Governor approval.

- Expanded Vision and Hearing Screenings**
 - Urges the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health to collaborate to prioritize expansion of vision and hearing screenings at various grade levels to identify students with undiagnosed and untreated vision or hearing problems.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
SAFETY AND SUPPORTS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for student advocacy specialists (reduced based on projected expenditures) 	(\$6.16 Million) GaDOE School Security Grants	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency Response System pilot program 	\$550,000 (one-time funds) GaDOE School Security Grants	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for mental health support to reflect accurate count of middle and high schools 	\$1.3 Million GaDOE Student Support Services	\$1.3 Million GaDOE Student Support Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for social work services 	\$1.4 Million GaDOE Student Support Services	\$1.6 Million in formula funds GaDOE Student Support Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funds for grants to districts to pilot programs that assist in maximizing reimbursement for mental health services 	\$750,000 GaDOE Student Support Services	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health services in public schools 	---	Recognize \$20,395,742 in available funds DBHDD Child/Adolescent Mental Health Services	---

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

<i>SAFETY AND SUPPORTS, CONTINUED</i>	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time pilot funds to districts for targeted support to economically disadvantaged students 	---	(\$15.28 Million) GaDOE Student Support Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-school Disability Services, based on formula earnings 	---	\$1.23 Million GaDOE Preschool Disability Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time grants to school systems to purchase vision and auditory screening equipment 	---	\$2.7 Million GaDOE Non-QBE Formula Grants	\$2.7 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School nurse funding 	---	\$0 Legislature left at base amount	\$867,401 Withheld; Dept. directed to adhere to fomula earnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ralston Center: for positions and development of resources to include behavioral health training to 300 high-needs elementary and middle schools pursuant to HB 268 (2025). 	---	\$500,000 PLUS existing funds (\$1,181,216) DBHDD Child and Adolescent Health Services	\$500,000 additional appropriation withheld; Existing funds directed to proceed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: Utilize existing funds to allow schools to engage part-time or full-time student advocacy specialists pursuant to HB 268 (2025). 	---	\$6,963,875 in existing funds GaDOE School Security Grants	VETOED by Governor (Georgia General Obligation Debt Sinking Fund)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bond #7: School Safety Equipment Grants 	---	\$50 million in 5-year G.O. bonds (\$11.96 million debt service)	\$30.66 Million withheld (operations portion); bus count formula grant updates proceed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formula grants for pupil transportation reflecting bus counts and operations 	---	\$38.17 Million GaDOE Pupil Transportation	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing costs for required bus driver safety training 	---	(\$79,200) GaDOE Pupil Transportation	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus replacement and safety equipment for 172 out-of-cycle buses 	---	Budget Direction: Use \$15,155,852 in AFY22 existing funds GaDOE Pupil Transportation	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of 98 out-of-cycle school buses 	---	Recognize \$9,844,148 in Volkswagen settlement funds GaDOE Pupil Transportation	---

SENATE STUDY COMMITTEES

SR 545 (Kemp-38th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

Senate Paid Student Teaching Study Committee

Establishes a 6-member study committee to study financial and logistical challenges faced by student teachers; the impact of unpaid student teaching on educator recruitment and retention; the relationship between paid internships and teacher preparedness, diversity, and performance; cost estimates for a statewide paid student teaching program; and best practices from other states and pilot programs.

Members: Yet to be appointed

SR 553 (Halpern-39th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

Senate Study Committee on Funding for Charter School Capital Improvements

Establishes a 5-member study committee to review current funding mechanisms for capital improvements in Georgia's public schools and their impact on charter schools; examine disparities in capital funding between charter schools and traditional public schools; and explore potential policy solutions, including legislative and regulatory actions, to ensure equitable access to capital improvement funding for charter schools.

Members: Yet to be appointed

SR 952 (Davenport-17th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

Senate Rosenwald Schools Study Committee

Establishes a 5-member study committee to study the history and impact of Rosenwald Schools.

Members: Yet to be appointed

House Blue Ribbon Study Committee

 **APPOINTED BY
SPEAKER JON BURNS**

Blue Ribbon Study Committee on Education Performance Metrics and Workforce Stability Funding

Mission: Evaluate Georgia's education evaluation measures to strengthen accountability, improve student success, and strengthen teacher recruitment and retention

Members: Rep. Bethany Ballard (R-Warner Robbins), Chair
Rep. Omari Crawford (D-Decatur)
Rep. Sandy Donatucci (R-Buford)
Rep. Leesa Hagan (R-Lyons)
Rep. Scott Hilton (R-Peachtree Corners)

Rep. Karen Lupton (D-Chamblee)
Rep. Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta)
Rep. Phil Olaleye (D-Atlanta)
Rep. Carmen Rice (R-Columbus)
Rep. Deborah Silcox (R-Sandy Springs)

SB 556 (Payne-56th)



DREAMS Scholarship

Postsecondary Scholarships and Financial Aid

- Creates the Dedicating Resources to Educationally Advance More Students (DREAMS) Scholarship — a needs-based scholarship for eligible students at eligible postsecondary institutions in Georgia. Maximum award: \$3,000/year for up to eight semesters or 12 quarters
- Establishes a scholarship for medical students conditional on practicing medicine in Georgia for no less than four years after graduation.

Student Financial Planning and Savings

- Raises the maximum savings trust account contribution per beneficiary for the Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan from \$235,000 to \$550,000.
- Clarifies provisions related to the minimum reserve amount of the lottery shortfall reserve.

HOPE Scholarship Eligibility

- Includes advanced fine arts courses in GPA calculations for HOPE and other scholarship eligibility

Campus Health and Safety

- Prevents prohibition of opioid antagonist possession on university system or technical college system property. Requires institutions to maintain a supply in a secure location and within three feet of any AED, subject to available funding. Authorizes personnel to administer opioid antagonists when necessary.

Postsecondary Employment and Retirement

- Updates the Georgia Defined Contribution Plan to clarify that individuals performing services for an institution in which they are enrolled are excluded from being considered employees.

HB 541 (Dempsey-13th)



Tuition Equalization Grants / Nursing Programs

Tuition Equalization Grant Expansion

- Expands tuition equalization grant eligibility to include higher education institutions that offer baccalaureate programs in nursing, have a current physical presence in Georgia for at least 10 years, are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and have a four-year average NCLEX pass rate of at least 80 percent

Program Eligibility Limits

- Clarifies these institutions are only considered as approved institutions for the tuition equalization grant program, not the Dual Enrollment program or HOPE scholarships/grants

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

PROGRAMS	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding to establish a robotics academy at the Savannah Campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology 	\$10 Million USG Public Service/ Special Funding Initiatives	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional slots for the High Demand Apprenticeship Program (HDAP) 	---	\$500,000 TCSG / Workforce Development	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Civic Thought and Leadership at Georgia Tech 	---	\$1.38 Million PLUS \$375,000 existing funds USG Public Service/Special Funding Initiatives	---

SCHOLARSHIPS

\$180 Million added in state dollars and \$145 Million added in Lottery dollars for state match for endowment (\$300,000,000) and scholarship funds (\$25,000,000) for the needs-based DREAMS Scholarship Program (AFY26)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HOPE Private School Scholarship (projected need) 	\$927,063 GSFC	\$3.18 Million GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HOPE Public School Scholarship (projected need) 	\$11.28 Million GSFC	\$41.51 Million GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPSE Grants (projected need) 	(\$1.1 Million) GSFC	(\$500,000) GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College Tuition Equalization Grants (projected need) 	---	\$3.99 Million GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Georgia Military Scholarship Grants 	---	\$671,954 GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Military College Scholarship 	---	\$756,237 GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Service Memorial Grant 	---	(\$290,000) GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace Officers Loan Repayment Program 	---	(\$2.7 Million) GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral Health Professions Service Cancelable Loan Program 	---	\$4 Million PLUS \$2 Million in existing surplus from Peace Officers Program GSFC	\$4 Million Withheld; \$2 million redirected proceeds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterinary student loan repayment program 	---	\$300,000 GSFC	\$300,000 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Foster Care Scholarship, SB 85 (2025). 	---	\$2.5 Million GSFC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for updated college completion eligibility requirements for TCSG students pursuant to HB 38 (2025). 	---	\$1 Million GSFC	---

HB 1293 (Jones-47th)



Dual Achievement Program/Permanent Program

Dual Achievement Program Permanency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitions the Dual Achievement Program from a pilot program to a permanent program within the Technical College System of Georgia
Student Eligibility Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For eligibility on or after July 1, 2028, a student must be between 18 and 23 years of age; withdrawn from a public school in this state; have not yet earned a high school diploma; meet admission requirements; and participate in provided wraparound services
Participation for Younger Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows eligible 16 or 17-year-old students to participate if they live in a completion special school attendance zone that does not have an operating completion special school
Program Funding Formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the State Board of Education to coordinate with OPB to develop a funding formula for the program, to be implemented by Fiscal Year 2028

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
DUAL ENROLLMENT/ DUAL ACHIEVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to meet projected Dual Enrollment need 	\$18.45 Million GSFC / Dual Enrollment	\$21.27 Million GSFC / Dual Enrollment	---
HIGHER ED ENROLLMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to reflect 4.95% in enrollment and 0.56% increase in square footage 	---	\$218.61 Million USG / Teaching	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to reflect 9.4% in enrollment and 0.9% increase in square footage 	---	\$34.15 Million TCSG / Adult Education	---

SENATE STUDY COMMITTEES

SR 978 (Burns-23rd)



Senate Study Committee on Higher Education Funding

Establishes a 5-member study committee to review and evaluate the efficacy and sufficiency of higher education funding formulas and to explore alternative funding formulas.

Members: Yet to be appointed

5 OUT-OF-HOME CARE

HB 1123 (Jones-47th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

After School Pre-K Programs

Pre-K Access to Afterschool Programs

- Requires public schools that offer afterschool programs AND operate Georgia Pre-K programs to allow students to participate in those afterschool programs

Effective 2026-2027 school year

- Allows schools to request a temporary one-year waiver from DECAL if extenuating circumstances prevent compliance

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMER LEARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-school care 	\$2.5 Million GaDOE / Student Support Services	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-school care grants for statewide and community grantees (BOOST grants) 	---	\$2.5 Million PLUS \$800,000 recognized in existing funds GaDOE / Student Support Services	\$2.5 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Youth Wellness 	---	\$50,000 DHS / Out-of-School Care Services	\$50,000 Withheld

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

ADMINISTRATION, TRAINING, FACILITIES

SB 535 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Community Service Boards

Community Service Board (CSB) Leadership

- Allows CSB executive directors (EDs) to serve on governing boards
- Requires EDs to be appointed by the DBHDD commissioner
- Transitions EDs to become employees of DBHDD

Employee Transition & Governance Requirements

- Permits executive directors serving as of June 30, 2026, to remain CSB employees if they elect to do so by August 1, 2026
- Requires CSB governing boards to incorporate minimum bylaws as established by DBHDD

HB 1097 (Petrea-166th)



Background Checks for Mental Health Facility Owners and Employees

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| National Background Checks | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows DBHDD to conduct national background checks for authorized facilities serving those with developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and substance use disorders.• National background checks may be used for facility owners, employees, contractors, and license applicants |
| <hr/> | |
| State Agency Background Check Authority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows all state agencies to request national background checks from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) in accordance with the federal 'National Child Protection Act of 1993.' |

SB 485 (Payne-54th)



Social Work Licensing Examination & Professional Licensing Updates

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| Social Work Licensure Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adds a subsection allowing someone in their final semester of their master's degree in social work to sit for the master's social work licensing examination |
| <hr/> | |
| Nail Technician Registration Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires nail technician registration applicants to present a REAL ID copy of their license as part of their application on and after July 1, 2028• All apprentices must have REAL ID on file in their place of business. |
| <hr/> | |
| Applied Behavioral Analysis Certification | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adds to code regarding applied behavior analysis the definition of certifying entity to include that a potential successor to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board must be a nonprofit organization |

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

FACILITIES/SERVICES	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40-bed forensic restoration facility at East Central Regional Hospital, Augusta, Richmond County 	<p>\$20.74 Million Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission / Capital Projects Fund / DBHDD</p>	<p>---</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriation to annualize the operations of a 30-bed Project New Hope forensic stepdown unit at West Central Georgia Regional Hospital in Columbus 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$1.62 Million DBHDD / Adult Forensic Services</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and Construction new Georgia Regional Hospital - Atlanta to address mental health and forensic bed capacity 	<p>\$409 Million Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission / Capital Projects Fund / DBHDD</p>	<p>---</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funding for behavioral and mental health services stabilization and augmentation 	<p>---</p>	<p>(\$3 Million) DCH / Healthcare Access and Improvement</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral and mental health stabilization / inpatient psychiatric services at sole-provider Level 1 trauma centers 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$2.4 Million DCH / Healthcare Access and Improvement</p>	<p>\$2.4 Million Withheld</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase psychiatric residential treatment facilities rate to \$800/day and provide discharge planning 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$229,228 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)</p>	<p>\$229,228 State Withheld</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase psychiatric residential treatment facilities rate to \$800/day and provide discharge planning 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$3.72 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low-Income)</p>	<p>\$3.72 Million Withheld / \$11.13 Million TOTAL</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminated one-time funding for Hope House 	<p>---</p>	<p>(\$50,000) DBHDD / Adult Addictive Diseases Services</p>	<p>---</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicaid rate enhancement for privately-owned Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) for individuals with intellectual disabilities 	<p>---</p>	<p>\$352,859 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)</p>	<p>\$352,859 State Withheld; \$1.06 million TOTAL</p>

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

CRISIS RESPONSE

SB 589 (Brass-6th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

"You Are Not Alone Awareness Act"

also listed in Early Childhood Education section above

Student ID Mental Health Resources

- Requires public schools that issue student ID badges in grades 6-12 to include 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline information, including that students can call or text 9-8-8 for support related to suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, or substance use concerns

Applies to badges issued on or after July 1, 2026

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
CRISIS RESPONSE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annualize the operational cost of the new Gateway child and adolescent crisis stabilization unit in Savannah 	---	\$1.14 Million DBHDD / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile crisis response teams 	---	\$2.36 Million DBHDD / Adult Mental Health Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for mental health crisis intervention services through the '988' hotline 	---	\$2.96 Million DBHDD / Adult Mental Health Services	---

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

WAIVERS AND SERVICES

SB 428 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Medicaid Waivers for Mental Health Services

Home and Community-Based Mental Health Services

- Authorizes the Department of Community Health to submit a waiver request to CMS to authorize Medicaid reimbursement of home and community-based services for those over the age of 21 in need of mental health services who do not require an institutional level of care.

HB 1238 (Dempsey-13th)

✗ DID NOT PASS

Respite Care Services for Families

Medicaid Coverage for Respite Care

- Would have directed the state to seek federal Medicaid approval to pay for respite care for families caring for children under 21 with serious behavioral health conditions who are at risk of entering foster care

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
COMPLEX NEEDS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annualize the cost of 150 NOW/COMP slots for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities 	---	\$3.21 Million DBHDD / Adult Developmental Disability Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize waiver enrollment due to attrition for the NOW/COMP to support 900 new slots for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities 	---	\$11.59 Million DBHDD / Adult Developmental Disability Services	\$9.27 Million Withheld; only \$2.32 Million released (approximately 100 slots). Full 900 slot expansion not funded.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOW/COMP administration 	---	\$284,380 DBHDD / Adult Developmental Disability Services	\$284,380 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support services 	---	\$150,000 DBHDD / Adult Developmental Disability Services	\$150,000 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Katie Beckett Medicaid case workers 	---	\$121,678 DCH / Departmental Administration	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3,000 salary enhancement for Katie Beckett Medicaid caseworkers for parity with DHS caseworkers 	---	\$20,222 DCH / Departmental Administration	\$20,222 Withheld; Salary increase already implemented using existing funds.

SB 433 (Strickland-42nd) **"Rio's Law"**

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

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|---|---|
| Developmental Disability Specialty License Plate | • Creates a special license plate for persons with autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disability |
| Law Enforcement Training | • Requires peace officer training include basic training courses on interacting with a driver with this license plate |

HB 943 (Silcox-53rd) & SB 402 (Tillery-19th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Pilot Program for Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children in Foster Care

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| Autism Screening Pilot Program for Foster Youth | • Requires DFCS to develop a 5-year pilot program to provide autism spectrum disorder screenings, clinical evaluations, and services for children in foster care, subject to appropriations, prioritizing those diagnosed with ADHD or reactive attachment disorder, or who have been prescribed psychotropic medication |
| Caregiver & Provider Training | • Requires training and resources for DFCS providers and caregivers |
| Pilot Program Expansion | • Launches the pilot program in three regional services areas with expansion into additional regions each year |
| Annual Reporting Requirements | • Requires DFCS to submit a written annual report on implementation and effectiveness to the governor, speaker of the House, president of the Senate, and chairpersons of relevant committees beginning one year after operation |

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

AUTISM	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
• Increase to create parity between in-home and in-office reimbursement rates for autism services	---	\$8.74 Million DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	\$8.74 Million Withheld
• Increase to create parity between in-home and in-office reimbursement rates for autism services	---	\$7.13 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low-Income)	\$7.13 Million State Withheld
• Expansion of autism pilot for foster children pursuant to HB 943 and SB 402 (2026); Total Funds: \$1,200,000	---	\$800,000 DHS / Child Welfare Services	\$800,000 State Withheld

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

AGENCY ADMINISTRATION

HB 1192 (Taylor-173rd)

 **GOVERNOR VETOED**

DCH and DHS Report to the Legislature on Spending

Also noted in Behavioral Health Section above

Dedicated Agency Funding Accounts

- Would have required funds appropriated to DCH and DHS and designated for specific purposes to be maintained in separate accounts, not co-mingled with other funds, and used for only designated purposes

Governor's Veto

- Governor Kemp stated that, while the General Assembly can exercise oversight through the appropriations process, this requirement goes beyond such authority and interjects the General Assembly into the operational oversight of executive branch agencies

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

DCH ADMINISTRATION

- Increase for 17 positions to support DCH operations

AFY26

FY27

\$1.04 Million
DCH / Department
Administration

GOVERNOR ACTION

\$1.04 Million Withheld

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE PIPELINE AND LICENSURE

SB 427 (Watson-1st)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Internationally Trained Physicians

Physical Licensure

- Allows the Composite Medical Board to issue a limited provisional license to an internationally trained physician to practice in Georgia

Practice Setting Requirements

- Requires a physician that holds this limited provisional license county, a licensed hospital, a federally qualified health center, or an accredited medical school

HB 1096 (Taylor-173rd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Retain Accrued Annual and Sick Leave

Leave Retention for Public Health Employees

- Allows eligible county board of health employees to retain accrued annual and sick leave when they become employed by the Georgia Department of Public Health

SB 162 (Hufstetler-52nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Automated Credentialing for Healthcare Providers

Medical Licensing Data System

- Requires the Georgia Composite Medical Board to implement an automated licensing data management software system for physicians, physician assistants, and anesthesiologist assistants

Statewide Verification System

- Establishes a single verification process for statewide authorization, accessible to other state medical boards, providers, and facilities.
- Requires the system be fully operational by January 1, 2027

HB 291 (Taylor-173rd)

 **DID NOT PASS**

Community Health Worker Certification

CHW Certification Process

- Would have established a certification process for community health workers (CHWs), who connect individuals to health care and essential services, particularly in underserved communities

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
MEDICAL EDUCATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Surgery Initiative and child and adolescent psychiatry slots at Augusta University 	\$734,438 PLUS \$432,338 in existing funds DCH / Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce	\$734,438 PLUS \$432,338 in existing funds DCH / Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of Graduate Medical Programs in South Georgia (one-time funds) 	\$17.81 Million DCH / Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal medicine residency program in South Georgia (one-time funding) 	\$2.13 Million DCH / Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Program at Gateway Behavioral Health 	---	\$432,338 DCH / Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of start-up funds for Augusta University and Georgia Southern University medical school expansion 	---	(\$4.69 Million) USG / Teaching	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance funding for the UGA School of Medicine 	---	\$9.55 Million USG / Teaching	---

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

MEDICAL EDUCATION, CONTINUED

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipment needs at Central Georgia Technical College to support Georgia's healthcare workers 	---	\$5 Million TCSG / Technical Education	\$5 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elimination of one-time funds for submission of a State Plan Amendment (SPA) for Medicaid funding for GME slots 	(\$300,000) DCH / Departmental Administration	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of 147 new residency slots in primary care medicine 	---	\$2.84 Million Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	\$747,146 withheld; \$2,096,412 proceeds for 105 slots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redirect existing funds for GME grants based on Medicaid Reimbursements for new residency slots pending approval of a SPA to fund the Rural Surgery Initiative and child and adolescent psychiatry slots at Augusta University 	---	Budget Direction: \$734,438 Existing Funds Redirected Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCH and the GA Board for Health Care Workforce shall annually submit a joint report detailing all state funds expended for GME by site, the number of residency and fellowship positions supported, and the number of new positions established or expanded during the preceding fiscal year 	---	Budget Direction Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 new fellowship slots 	---	\$1.92 Million Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	\$1.92 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funds for GME program faculty expenses 	---	\$500,000 Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	\$500,000 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up funding for a family medicine residency program 	---	\$500,000 Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	\$500,000 Withheld

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

MEDICAL EDUCATION, CONTINUED

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate Medical Education 	---	(\$1.17 Million) Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / GME	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot for pediatric residency with a rural training track 	---	\$3 Million Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / Mercer School of Medicine Grant	\$3 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical student capitation for 380 certified Georgia residents at PCOM 	---	\$2.42 Million Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / Healthcare Education Programs	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the nursing program at Andrew College 	---	\$138,000 Georgia Board of Healthcare Workforce / Healthcare Education Programs	\$138,000 Withheld

PROVIDER/SUPPLIER REIMBURSEMENT RATES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to ambulance provider fees based on projected revenue 	---	\$2.65 Million DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind and Disabled)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to provide a 5% increase for two primary care codes 	---	\$3.3 Million DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind and Disabled)	\$3.3 Million State Withheld (\$9.86 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to provide a 5% increase for two primary care codes 	---	\$5.44 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	\$5.44 Million State Withheld (\$21.70 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: The Division for Medicaid Services shall establish a rate floor to reimburse at no less than 100% of the state Medicaid program for durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies, with a standardized fee schedule. 	---	\$1.38 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	\$1.38 Million State Withheld (\$4.13 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to the prospective payment rate for federally qualified health centers 	---	\$603,061 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	\$603,061 State Withheld (\$1.80 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase reimbursement rates for air ambulance 	---	\$299,092 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	\$299,092 State Withheld (\$894,748 Total)

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

PROVIDER/SUPPLIER REIMBURSEMENT RATES, CONTINUED	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase reimbursement rates for air ambulance 	---	\$246,311 DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	\$246,311 State Withheld (\$736,851 Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the prospective payment rate for federally qualified health centers. 	---	\$1.74 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	\$1.74 Million State Withheld (\$5.22 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase dental code reimbursement rates 	---	\$515,010 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	\$515,010 State Withheld (\$1,540,678 Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase dental code reimbursement rates 	---	\$5.29 Million DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	\$5.29 Million State Withheld (\$15.81 Million Total)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase dental code reimbursement rates 	---	\$148,018 DCH / PeachCare for Kids	\$148,018 State Withheld (\$632,557 Million Total)

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

PHARMACIST SCOPE OF PRACTICE

HB 1138 (Camp-135th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Increasing Access to Contraceptives Act

Pharmacist-Provided Contraceptives

- Allows a pharmacist to dispense a self-administered hormonal contraceptive or administer an injectable hormonal contraceptive

Effective January 1, 2027

SB 195 (Hufstetler-52nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

PrEP Bill

Pharmacist Authority for HIV Prevention Medications

- Authorizes a pharmacist to dispense and administer pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)

HB 506 (Hilton-48th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Prevent Ambulance Surprise Billing

Emergency Ambulance Coverage

- Requires health plans to treat emergency ambulance transport as a covered service when requested by a first responder or healthcare provider

Out-of-Network Ambulance Reimbursement

- For out-of-network ambulance providers, insurers must reimburse at the locally established government rate, or if no such rate exists, at 300 percent of the Medicare rate (per the final bill as passed)

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
HEALTHCARE ACCESS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant program to support the creation of new rural medical and dental clinics 	\$3.2 Million DCH / Healthcare Access & Improvement	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand access to healthcare in medically underserved areas in East Central Georgia 	\$900,000 Mercer School of Medicine Grant	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Health Transformation Funding for emergency preparedness 	---	\$1 Million DCH / Healthcare Access & Improvement	\$1 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to develop and implement a solvency evaluation process for rural hospitals 	---	\$4 Million DCH / Healthcare Access & Improvement	\$4 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the prospective payment rate for federally qualified health centers 	---	\$603,061 DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	\$603,061 State Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Health Transformation Funding for rural hospital stabilization grants 	---	\$2 Million in state general funds in the base PLUS \$9,540,817 recognized DCH / Healthcare Access & Improvement	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining core clinical staff who operate the Trauma Recovery Center. 	---	\$750,000 DPH / Emergency Preparedness/Trauma System Improvement	\$750,000 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriations for Georgia Poison Center 	---	\$140,000 DPH / Epidemiology	\$140,000 Withheld

HB 350 (Cameron-1st)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

“Eliza Jane Warner Act” (Baby Safety Devices)

Newborn Safe Surrender Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires health plans to treat emergency ambulance transport as a covered service when requested by a first responder or healthcare provider
Newborn Safety Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows placement of newborn safety devices — enclosed, locked, monitored receptacles — at medical facilities, fire stations, police stations, and ambulance services. Devices must be conspicuous and the facility must have an EMS provider on staff 24/7
Legal Protections for Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects individuals assisting a mother or acting at the direction of a mother from prosecution for child cruelty, dependency, or abandonment for acts shielded under applicable Code section
State Funding Restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No state funds shall be expended in the acquisition or operation of newborn safety devices.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
MATERNAL HEALTH			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of maternal home visiting program to an additional 33 counties 	---	\$3.72 Million DPH / Infant and Child Essential Health Treatment Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction to reflect newly approved Rural OB Directed Payment Programs and continue \$3,000 add-on payment for newborn deliveries in rural counties with a population of 35,000 or less 	---	(\$2.17 Million) DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funding for telecare and maternal health programs 	---	\$250,000 DCH / Healthcare Access & Improvement	\$250,000 Withheld

SB 111 (Albers-56th)



"Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act" – Rural Hospital Tax Credit Expansion

Rural Hospital Organization Definition

- Amends the definition of 'rural hospital organization' to include 'rural freestanding emergency department'

Eligibility Requirements

- Requires the organization to have its primary campus in a rural county and be licensed to provide maternal/newborn services

SB 503 (Harbin-16th)



Orthotic and Prosthetic Devices

Orthotic and Prosthetic Coverage

- Requires insurance companies to cover medically necessary orthotic and prosthetic devices, along with their materials and components.

SB 444 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)



Medical Procedure Determination

Artificial Intelligence Definitions

- Defines 'Artificial intelligence' and 'Artificial intelligence system' in Georgia law

AI Use in Coverage Decisions

- Clarifies that AI-driven decisions cannot be the sole reason for denying coverage, and may not replace the independent judgment of a qualified clinical reviewer

HB 334 (Crawford-89th)



Sickle Cell Disease Protection Act

Medicaid Review of Sickle Cell Coverage

- Requires the Department of Community Health to conduct an annual review of sickle cell disease medications, treatments, and services eligible for Medicaid coverage.
- Findings submitted by January 15 annually with public input from those with lived experience

RSV Information for Families

- Requires childcare learning centers and homes to provide information about RSV to parents and guardians of enrolled children

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<p>SICKLE CELL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia 	---	\$247,587 plus \$1,752,413 recognized in base funds DPH / Adolescent and Adult Health Promotion	\$247,587 Withheld
<p>MEDICAID GROWTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to meet growth in Medicaid based on project utilization 	---	\$308.18 Million DCH / Medicaid (Aged, Blind, and Disabled)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction to reflect projected utilization 	---	(\$41.32 Million) DCH / Medicaid (Low Income)	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction for growth in Medicaid based on projected utilization 	---	(\$3 Million) DCH / PeachCare for Kids	---

SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE

SR 927 (Hatchett-50th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

Senate Pharmacy Benefits Managers and Consumer Access to Prescription Medications Study Committee

Establishes a 5-member Senate study committee to study Pharmacy Benefits Managers and Consumer Access to Prescription Medications.

Members: Yet to be appointed

HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE

HR 948 (Stephens-164th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

House Pharmacy Benefits Managers and Consumer Access to Prescription Medications Study Committee

Establishes a 5-member House study committee to study Pharmacy Benefits Managers and Consumer Access to Prescription Medications.

Members: Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Savannah), Chair
Rep. Debbie Buckner (D-Junction City)
Rep. Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin)

Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville)
Rep. Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro)

House Blue-Ribbon Study Committees

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Community Health and Healthcare Oversight

 **APPOINTED BY
SPEAKER JON BURNS**

Mission: Evaluate Georgia's overall healthcare landscape to improve access, strengthen patient protections, and identify practical policy solutions to enhance outcomes, efficiency, and accountability across the state

Members: Rep. Mark Newton (R-Augusta), Chair
Rep. Debbie Buckner (D-Junction City)
Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville)
Rep. Anissa Jones (D-Macon)
Rep. Rob Leverett (R-Elberton)

Rep. Derrick McCollum (R-Chestnut Mountain)
Rep. Billy Mitchell (D-Stone Mountain)
Rep. Alan Powell (R-Hartwell)
Rep. Devan Seabaugh (R-Marietta)
Rep. Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville)

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Youth Exposure to Kratom and Retail-Available Substances

 **APPOINTED BY
SPEAKER JON BURNS**

Mission: Evaluate the impact of kratom and other retail-available products on minors to strengthen protections, reduce access, and create healthier outcomes for Georgia's youth.

Members: Rep. Rick Townsend (R-Brunswick), Chair
Rep. Michelle Au (D-Johns Creek)
Rep. Dar'shun Kendrick (D-Lithonia)
Rep. Danny Mathis (R-Cochran)

Rep. Steven Meeks (R-Screven)
Rep. Jordan Ridley (R-Woodstock)
Rep. Tyler Paul Smith (R-Bremen)

HB 256 (WIEDOWER-121ST)



Foster Care Parents Bill of Rights

Foster Placements Bill of Rights

- Revises the Foster Parents Bill of Rights to be the Foster Placements Bill of Rights, applying to foster parents, relative caregivers, and fictive kin

Expanded Caregiver Rights

- New rights include: (1) a reasonable and prudent parent standard for extracurricular activities; (2) the right to request a certified volunteer advocate at DHS meetings; (3) freedom from retaliation or discrimination for DFCS complaints; and (4) the right to seek independent legal advice/counsel regarding foster placement status.

DHS Grievance Procedures & Court Recordings

- Updates DHS grievance procedure development date from 2007 to 2026.
- Requires all Juvenile Code proceedings must be recorded; parties and DHS have the right to the full recording without a court order.

SB 431 (Kirkpatrick-32ND)



Enrollment of Foster Care Students in Schools

School Enrollment Protections for Foster Youth

- Strengthens protections for foster care students transferring schools by requiring receiving schools to enroll them within three school business days after receiving a completed registration form

Compliance & Reporting Requirements

- Creates a process for reporting noncompliance and allows the Department of Education to require corrective action plans. RESA student affairs officers and the DOE must prepare reports on disputes and enrollment issues

Inclusive Postsecondary Education Grants

- Expands the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) grant program to include certain eligible private postsecondary institutions offering programs for students with intellectual disabilities. Removes the prior sunset date for students enrolled by July 1, 2028.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

CHILD WELFARE & FOSTER CARE	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an integrated child welfare reporting system 	\$3 Million DHS / Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention	\$3 Million GBI / Criminal Justice Information Systems	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase for utilization growth and increased costs of care prioritizing reunification services, assessments, and specialized services for high-acuity youth 	\$81.09 Million DHS / DFCS Out-of-Home Care	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of the cancelation of state office contracts for supportive services (\$674,400) and implement funds to place foster youth closer to their biological families as directed in the FY26 budget (\$250,000) 	\$924,800 DHS / DFCS Out-of-Home Care	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transferred funds for community action teams from Out-of-Home Care to Child Welfare Services to align budgets to expenditures 	---	\$371,500 DHS / Child Welfare Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to support reunification, youth exiting foster care, and families at risk of child welfare involvement 	---	\$1.5 Million DHS / Child Welfare Services	\$1.5 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funding for essential clothing and supplies for foster youth 	---	\$300,000 DHS / Out-of-Home Care	\$600,000 Withheld (\$300,000 in new + \$300,000 FY2026 carryover)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funding to place foster youth closer to their biological families 	---	\$250,000 DHS / Out-of-Home Care	\$500,000 Withheld (\$250,000 in new + \$250,000 FY2026 carryover)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase for utilization growth and increased costs of care 	---	\$50 Million DHS / Out-of-Home Care	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent living services 	---	\$675,000 DHS / Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Program	\$675,000 Withheld

CHILD PROTECTION

CHILD ABUSE: REPORTING, REVIEW & ACCOUNTABILITY

SB 383 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Updates Child Fatality Review Policy

Child Fatality Review Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revises the scope and purpose of local child fatality review to focus on identifying opportunities for intervention and recommending measures to prevent future deaths.
Review Committee Membership & Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds a local school system representative to review committee membership. Updates references to include sudden infant death syndrome, sudden unexplained infant death, and sleep-related infant death
Review Timeline Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the chairperson to convene the review committee every 30 days to review reports and investigate circumstances of all child deaths meeting the review criteria.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
CHILD FATALITY REVIEW			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase for recruitment and retention of medical examiners 	---	\$1.05 Million GBI / Forensic Scientific Services	\$1.05 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2,000 salary adjustment for crime lab scientists, supervisors, and managers 	---	\$750,930 GBI / Forensic Scientific Services	\$750,930 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase for evidence receiving technicians and forensic technicians 	---	\$491,178 GBI / Forensic Scientific Services	\$491,178 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: Provide discretion to hire new medical examiners on appropriate pay scale level based on years of experience 	---	No new funds GBI / Forensic Scientific Services	Governor instructed to disregard language; creates unfunded mandate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: Utilize existing funds to provide a salary increase to the fellows program and authorize on additional fellow 	---	Utilize existing funds GBI / Forensic Scientific Services	Governor instructed to disregard language; insufficient underlying funding

HB 1192 (Taylor-173rd)

 **GOVERNOR VETOED**

DCH and DHS Report to the Legislature on Spending

Also noted in Behavioral Health Section above

Dedicated Agency Funding Accounts

- Would have required funds appropriated to DCH and DHS and designated for specific purposes to be maintained in separate accounts, not co-mingled with other funds, and used for only designated purposes

Governor's Veto

- Governor Kemp stated that, while the General Assembly can exercise oversight through the appropriations process, this requirement goes beyond such authority and interjects the General Assembly into the operational oversight of executive branch agencies

SB 587 (Still-48th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Animal Cruelty Database and Child Displacement

Locating Parents or Guardians During Abuse Investigations

- Allows for court orders to locate the parent or guardian of an alleged victim of child or elder abuse if a child or vulnerable person is moved to an unknown location during an open investigation.

Practice Setting Requirements

- Requires PAC to create and maintain a statewide animal cruelty database listing those convicted of specified animal-related offenses, accessible at no cost and updated at least monthly.
- Requires the database to be created by January 1, 2027, subject to appropriations.

HB 1409 (Camp-135th)

 **GOVERNOR VETOED**

Child Abuse Reporting

Expanded Mandated Reporter Requirements

- Would have added firefighters and animal service workers to the list of mandated reporters of child abuse, created a secure web-based reporting system, mandated reporting within 24 hours, and improved protocols for military families.

Governor's Veto

- Governor Kemp stated that, while DFCS must improve its current system, the bill would preclude DFCS from competitively procuring solutions because the operational requirements are so narrowly specified.
- The Governor also stated that implementation of statutory requirements is properly the domain of the executive branch.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

REPRESENTATION & CHILD ABUSE REPORTING	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added funds (and utilize Children Trust Funds of \$786,598) for CASA to enhance statewide capacity 	---	\$1.21 Million DHS / Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention	\$1.21 Million State Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase hourly rates for SAAGs and paralegals 	---	\$2.3 Million DHS / Child Welfare Services	\$2.3 Million State Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase hourly rates for SAAGs and paralegals 	---	\$418,560 DHS / Child Support Services	\$418,560 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: Utilize existing funds (\$277,325) for the animal cruelty database pursuant to SB 587 (2026). 	---	No new funds Prosecuting Attorneys / Prosecuting Attorneys' Council	---

CHILD PROTECTION

SEXUAL ABUSE & EXPLOITATION, VICTIM SERVICES

HB 1187 (Hong-103rd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Trey's Law

Prohibition of Nondisclosure Agreements

- Bans nondisclosure agreements for victims of child sexual abuse.
- voids any agreement provision that has the purpose or effect of concealing details relating to a claim of childhood sexual abuse as contrary to public policy.

Settlement Confidentiality & Enforcement

- A person may keep confidential other provisions of a settlement, including amount and payment terms.
- A person may not enforce an agreement that prevents disclosure unless the person obtains a declaratory judgment that is final and declares that the agreement is enforceable.

SB 542 (Robertson-29th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Clergy Member Improper Sexual Contact

Establishment of New Offenses

- Adds the offense of **improper sexual contact by a clergy member in the first degree (imprisonment 1 to 25 years) and second degree (misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature for a first conviction)** when a person in a pastoral counseling or spiritual authority relationship knowingly engages in sexually explicit conduct or sexual contact through coercion or intimidation.

Statute of Limitations

- Establishes a statute of limitations of 15 years.

SB 547 (Strickland-42nd) **Pimping and Pandering**



Penalty Reclassification

- Makes both pimping and pandering felonies punishable by imprisonment for one to 10 years, regardless of whether it is the first or subsequent offense.
- Removes prior provisions that made first offenses high and aggravated misdemeanors.

SB 570 (Still-48th)



Training in Identifying Human Trafficking

Training Requirements

- Requires hotels and third-party managed short-term rental properties' employees to complete a training course annually on identifying and reporting suspected human trafficking

Penalties for Noncompliance

- Imposes fines on owners, operators, or managers who violate this Code section: \$500 for a first offense, \$1,000 for a second offense, and \$2,000 for a third or subsequent violation

Exemptions

- Does not apply to short-term rental properties managed exclusively by the property owner and offered for rental fewer than 15 days per calendar year

HB 1283 (Panitch-51st)



"Family Justice Center Act"

Creation of Family Justice Centers

- Allows for the creation of Family Justice Centers, which are multiagency centers that provide coordinated services to victims of family violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, human trafficking, and associated crimes.

Eligible Operators

- A Family Justice Center can be organized and operated by a county or municipal government, a district attorney's office, or a nonprofit corporation designated to operate the center.

CJCC Grants & Funding

- The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) may administer grants, enter into contracts, and distribute funds for the establishment and support of Family Justice Centers, prioritizing proposals with broad multidisciplinary collaboration and measurable outcomes.

Victim Confidentiality Protections

- No information shared by a victim within a Family Justice Center will be disclosed without informed, written consent, except as required by law or court order.

Retention of Sexual Assault Evidence

- If a victim chooses not to report an alleged sexual assault to law enforcement at the time of evidence collection, law enforcement will maintain the evidence for 10 years from the date it was collected.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING & VICTIM SERVICES

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annualize 3 human trafficking positions 	\$294,420 GBI / Regional Investigative Services	\$287,300 GBI / Regional Investigative Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of 8 Child Advocacy Centers and 10 satellite office location that meet minimum standards to provide specialized services not currently state funded, effective April 1, 2026 	\$185,241	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time funds to domestic violence shelters and sexual assault centers for operational and facility needs 	\$4.53 Million	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of child advocacy centers 	---	\$1 Million Transferred from DHS (Child Welfare Services) to CJCC	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Sexual Exploitation Recovery Center (CSERC) 	---	\$8.12 Million Transferred from Safe Harbor Commission to Out-of-Home Care program DHS / Out-of-Home Care	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic violence shelters 	---	\$9.4 Million CJCC	\$9.4 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Assault Centers 	---	\$3.3 Million CJCC	\$3.3 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Violence program for child advocacy centers 	---	\$821,946 PLUS \$1 Million Transferred CJCC	\$1.82 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child advocacy centers to support vulnerable children 	---	\$5.27 Million PLUS \$3.13 Million Transferred CJCC	\$5.27 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight child advocacy centers and 20 satellite CACs not currently receiving state funding 	---	\$912,641 CJCC	\$912,641 Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction to offset the loss of VOCA funds for Federal FY2025 	---	(\$3.13 Million) CJCC	---

HB 162 (Hagan-156th)



GBI Restriction of First Offender Act

- Automatic Record Sealing for First Offenders**

 - Automatically restricts and seals the record of an offense by an individual after July 1, 2026, who was sentenced under the First Offenders Act. A clerk will seal every document within 60 days of exoneration and discharge.

- Record Sealing for Prior First Offenders**

 - Those exonerated prior to July 1, 2026, may petition the court to have records sealed; all court records will be sealed within 90 days. If first offender status is revoked, records will be unsealed and may be disseminated.

- Access to Sealed Records**

 - Records will always be available for the Judicial Qualifications Commission; by judges of courts of competent jurisdiction; by a prosecutor or public defender who submits an affidavit; pursuant to a court order; or by the individual who is the subject of the records.

HB 1247 (Reeves-99th)



Georgia Bureaucratic Deference Elimination Act

- Agency Deference in Legal Proceedings**

 - "Georgia Bureaucratic Deference Elimination Act," prohibits courts and administrative hearing officers from deferring to state agency interpretations of laws and regulations when making legal determinations. This applies to courts generally as well as specifically to the Georgia Tax Court and to tax-related appeals, though it does not affect deference standards already established by statute or deference accorded to rules promulgated under the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act.

- Disclosure of Legislative Employment Settlements**

 - Requires that settlement agreements resolving employment practice claims — including harassment, discrimination, and retaliation claims — made against members of the General Assembly be subject to public disclosure, with the claimant's identity redacted but the member's identity retained. The provision applies to claims made on or after January 1, 2019, establishes a three-business-day response window for disclosure requests, and creates enforcement mechanisms including civil and criminal penalties (up to a \$2,500 fine and felony charges for repeat willful violations).

- Agency Rulemaking Oversight**

 - "Red Tape Rollback Act of 2026," revises procedures for legislative oversight of agency rulemaking. It lowers the threshold for the General Assembly to override an agency rule from a two-thirds vote to a simple majority (with a gubernatorial veto option if the vote falls below two-thirds), and adds a new requirement that agencies periodically review and report on their rules to the Office of Planning and Budget on a five-year cycle beginning July 1, 2028.

- Homeless Outreach Reporting Requirements**

 - Requires privately funded organizations providing outreach services to homeless individuals within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, childcare centers, or playgrounds — within a ten-mile radius of Atlanta — to participate in the Georgia Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), with civil citations for noncompliance.

Professional Licensing - Criminal Record Preclearance Process

Professional Licensure Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amends numerous statutes relating to various professional licensing boards. Applicants for professional licensure will be entitled to a hearing before the professional licensing board in a timely manner.
Criminal Record Predeterminations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual with a criminal record may petition a professional licensing board at any time for a predetermination as to whether their criminal record will disqualify them from licensure. The bill sets forth factors that boards must consider in these licensing decisions.
Appeals & Record Accuracy Protections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are established to contest erroneous licensure denials based on inaccurate criminal records. Boards must notify petitioners of grounds and rationale for denial, and an individual whose application has been denied may petition for administrative review.
Occupational Licensing Board Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No later than March 31 each year, each occupational licensing board will file a report addressing the number of applicants and licenses granted, the number of applicants with a criminal record, and the number of predetermination petitioners.
Trafficking Victim Sentence Vacatur Petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the clerk of court to accept under seal a trafficking victim defendant's petition to vacate their sentence without a court order. All subsequent filings and court documents related to the petition will remain under seal.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

DEPT. OF JUVENILE JUSTICE, COURTS	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase for personal services due to decreased turnover 	<p>\$2.54 Million DJJ / Secure Detention (RYDCs)</p>	<p>\$2.54 Million DJJ / Secure Detention (RYDCs)</p>	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the Judicial Retirement System employer contribution rate due to the passage of HB 85 (2025). 	---	<p>\$493,168 Juvenile Courts / Grants to Counties for Juvenile Courts</p>	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for new and existing accountability courts to support population growth 	---	<p>\$1.38 Million Recognized in existing funds PLUS \$1.74 Million CJCC / Council of Accountability Court Judges</p>	\$1.74 Million Withheld

HB 1061 (Camp-135th)

Raise the Age - The Mandi Ballinger Act

 **DID NOT PASS**

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction Study Committee

- Would have created a 15-member organizational committee focusing on the implementation of expanding the jurisdiction of juvenile courts to include 17-year-olds.

Implementation Planning & Cost Analysis

- The committee would provide a detailed written report including all necessary operational and statutory changes, including cost estimates for each part of the implementation plan.

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Criminal Post-Conviction Litigation

 **APPOINTED BY SPEAKER JON BURNS**

Mission: Examine Georgia's post-conviction legal framework to protect constitutional rights, reduce delays, and improve the efficiency of the state's justice system.

Members: Rep. Stan Gunter (R-Blairsville), Chair
Rep. Clint Crowe (R-Jackson)
Rep. Chuck Efstrotation (R-Mulberry)
Rep. Bill Fincher (R-Canton)

Rep. Scott Holcomb (D-Atlanta)
Rep. Soo Hong (R-Lawrenceville)
Rep. Rob Leverett (R-Elberton)
Rep. Tyler Paul Smith (R-Bremen)

10 SHELTER & NUTRITION

HB 947 (Momtahan-17th)

Georgia SNAP Integrity Act of 2026

 **DID NOT PASS**

SNAP Program Integrity & Eligibility

- Would have strengthened oversight of Georgia's SNAP program by tightening eligibility rules, requiring faster verification, and adding data-matching safeguards. Also limited certain benefit flexibilities and SNAP purchase categories.

SNAP Error Rate Reduction

- Sought to reduce Georgia's 16.65% SNAP error rate (third highest nationally) to below 6% by FY 2028. Passed the House on Crossover Day along party lines, 95-66.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gateway system modifications to reduce the SNAP payment error rate and ensure federal compliance 	\$6.21 Million DHS / Federal Eligibility Benefit Services	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to reflect a reduction in the federal SNAP administrative reimbursement from 50% to 25% 	---	\$5.93 Million DHS / Departmental Administration	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjustment in eFMAP 	---	(\$3,195) DHS / Departmental Administration	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to reflect a reduction in the federal SNAP administrative reimbursement from 50% to 25% 	---	\$40.43 Million DHS / Federal Eligibility Benefit Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce the SNAP payment error rate 	---	\$6.88 Million DHS / Federal Eligibility Benefit Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase to recognize the increase in staff costs due to the change in CMS policy on the enhanced federal matching rate 	---	\$5.33 Million DHS / Federal Eligibility Benefit Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Direction: DHS shall submit a corrective action plan to reduce the SNAP error rate to at or below 6% and mitigate federal financial penalties, including eligibility verification reforms, data-matching improvements, and staffing adjustments, submitted by July 1, 2026 	---	No allocated appropriations DHS / Federal Eligibility Benefit Services	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of a summer nutrition program for eligible students in coordination with DHS 	---	\$1 Million GaDOE / Nutrition	\$1 Million Withheld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of a summer nutrition program for eligible students in coordination with DOE 	---	\$1 Million DHS / Out-of-School Care Services	\$1 Million Withheld

HB 61 (Seabaugh-34th)

✗ DID NOT PASS

Georgia Anti-Squatting Act of 2026

Squatting & Innkeeper Authority

- Would have clarified Georgia’s laws regarding unlawful squatting and the authority of innkeepers to remove noncompliant guests from lodging establishments.

Notice Requirements & Record Sealing

- Would have established additional notice requirements for removals and provided for the sealing of certain eviction records.

HB 689 (Carpenter-4th)

✗ DID NOT PASS

The Homeless Prevention Program

Homelessness Prevention Grant Program

- Would have created a flexible local grant program within the Georgia Department of Community Affairs State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless to provide short-term emergency rental and utility assistance, legal representation in eviction, mediation, and other homelessness prevention support.

RELEVANT APPROPRIATIONS

	AFY26	FY27	GOVERNOR ACTION
<p>HOUSING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time funding for the State Housing Trust Fund for local government grants to address homelessness through matching funds and recognize additional funding for homelessness in the Department of Veterans Service 	<p>\$45 Million Dept. of Community Affairs / Housing Initiative</p>	---	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia Housing Voucher Program for 404 additional housing vouchers 	---	<p>\$9.32 Million DBHDD / Adult Mental Health Services</p>	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce allocated administrative costs to affordable housing and community development programs resulting from unfunded cost-of-living adjustments and reduced federal funding 	---	<p>\$2.77 Million DCA / Departmental Administration</p>	---
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time funding for the State Housing Trust Fund (recognized instead in AFY2026) 	---	<p>(\$2 Million) DCA / Housing Initiatives</p>	---

JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE

HR 1416 (Dickey-134th)

 **PASSED & ADOPTED**

Joint Study Committee on Generational Sustainability of Family Farms

Creates a 9-member Joint Study Committee on the Generational Sustainability of Family Farms. The committee will stand abolished on December 1, 2027.

House Members: Rep. Robert Dickey (R-Musella)
Rep. Jaclyn Ford (R-Tifton)

Rep. David Huddleston (R-Roopville)
Rep. Angie O'Steen (R-Ambrose)

Senate Members: Yet to be appointed

11 TECHNOLOGY & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

HB 1009 (Hilton-48th)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Cell Phone Ban

Expanded School Cell Phone Restrictions

- Expands the current public school bell-to-bell cell phone ban from kindergarten through 8th grade to kindergarten through 12th grade. K-8 students are prohibited beginning July 1, 2026; grades 9-12 prohibited by July 1, 2027.

Implementation & Exceptions

- The ban is subject to limited legal, medical, and IEP/504 exceptions. Mandates clear cell phone storage procedures, enforcement mechanisms, parent communication protocols, progressive discipline, and off-campus guidance.

SB 444 (Kirkpatrick-32nd)

 **SIGNED INTO LAW**

Medical Procedure Determination *(also listed in Health Section)*

Home and Community-Based Mental Health Services

- Authorizes the Department of Community Health to submit a waiver request to CMS to authorize Medicaid reimbursement of home and community-based services for those over the age of 21 in need of mental health services who do not require an institutional level of care.

SB 540 (Anavitate-31st)



AI Chatbots & Minors

AI Companion Chatbot Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Defines ‘AI companion chatbot’ as a system using artificial intelligence or emotional recognition algorithms designed to simulate a sustained human or human-like relationship with a user.
User Disclosure Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires operators to disclose to users that they are interacting with an AI at the start of every session and at least every three hours — or every one hour if the user is a minor.
Protections for Minors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If the operator knows or should have known a user is a minor, prohibits the chatbot from claiming to be sentient or human, producing sexual content, simulating romantic or sexual relationships, role-playing adult-minor relationships, encouraging minors to keep secrets from trusted adults, encouraging social isolation, or simulating emotional distress when a minor attempts to end or reduce use.
Restrictions on Engagement Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires operators to prevent chatbots from using engagement-maximizing tactics directed at minors.
Self-Harm & Suicide Prevention Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires all operators to implement and publicly disclose a protocol for detecting and addressing expressions of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and eating disorder-related self-harm, including automated referrals to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
Age Verification & Data Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires age verification before enabling features that may generate sexually explicit content; prohibits operators from selling or retaining age verification data beyond 24 hours.
Parental Controls & Professional Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires operators to offer parental control tools for minor accounts. Prohibits chatbots from claiming to be licensed mental health, medical, or counseling professionals unless the operator holds such licensure.
Enforcement & Penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Authorizes the Attorney General to bring civil actions and recover up to \$10,000 per knowing violation per user per day.

STUDY COMMITTEE


Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on the Impact of Online Platforms on Georgia Youth



Mission: Evaluate the effects of online platforms on minors to strengthen safety protections, address mental health concerns, and promote age-appropriate access to online content.

- Members:
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Rep. Rob Clifton (R-Evans), Chair | Rep. Tangie Herring (D-Macon) |
| Rep. Debra Bazemore (D-South Fulton) | Rep. Jan Jones (R-Milton) |
| Rep. Beth Camp (R-Concord) | Rep. Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth) |
| Rep. Johnny Chastain (R-Blue Ridge) | Rep. Brad Thomas (R-Holly Springs) |
| Rep. Lydia Glaize (D-Fairburn) | Rep. Anne Allen Westbrook (D-Savannah) |

Staff: Shawn Conroy, Consumer Protection Division, Georgia Attorney General’s Office




Voices

for Georgia's Children

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